

The Indian State of Kerala:

A Land Blessed By Allah

>Motaz Othman - Kerala/India

The name "Kerala" is an Islamic Arabic name, "Khair-Allah," chosen by Arab and Muslim traders in the region more than a thousand years ago, due to its mild climate, clean air, the abundance of rain, springs and diverse vegetation, which covers all parts of the state.

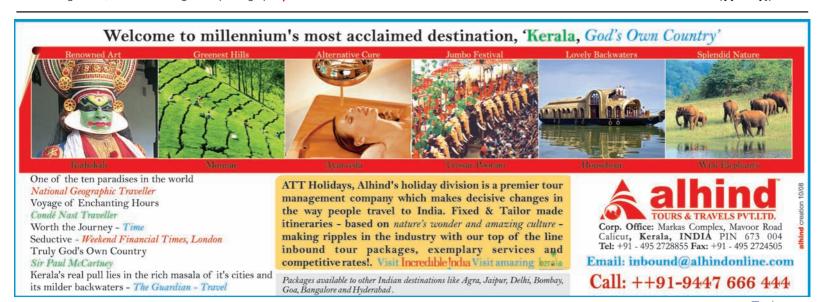
The people of Kerala are self-sufficient in terms of food and drinking water. They benefit from rubber trees covering the province, extract rubber and sell it, produce the best spices in the world and tea from the plantations which is exported around the world. They also benefit from different types of trees such as coconuts, pineapples, mangoes and various fruit trees and vegetables. Sheep and cattle provide low cost food.

Kerala is surrounded by the Arabian Sea on its western side, the source of sea food throughout the year. No wonder the country is known as the blessed land.

The tourist industry takes advantage of the abundance of scenic mountains in the east and rich wildlife and rare bird species, including the King Fisher, which I managed to photograph Boat houses



بيوت القوارب Boat houses





during our boat trip in Kerala's backwaters. Our tour in the western part of the state, which took five hours to reach, enabled us to see the landscape and waterfalls, which were abundant along the way. We also saw Kerala women collecting tea leaves from the farms. They pick only the top three leaves. I visited a tea factory and bought good quality tea: the best kind is the one with relatively large leaves. Travel agents provide integrated programs for visitors. For example, there is the boat trip in the back waters, where you enjoy the magnificent scenery and rare birds, as well as the clean and beautiful beaches along the Arabian Sea. This area is ideal for swimming and sailing. The mountains and tea plantations are an added attraction. There are many festivals in Kerala and the state is rich in heritage.

My visit coincided was the holy month of

Ramadan. I came to know some of the local traditions for this occasion when I was invited for dinner to the home of my friend Mr. Najib, a senior man in Kerala tourism. We had a very

light breakfast, consisting of soup, and after prayers came the main meal. The Muslims of Kerala have many rich traditions: welcome to the blessed land!



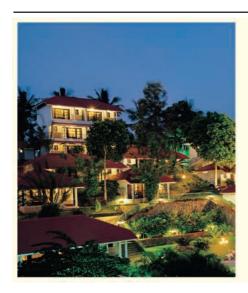
حياة نهرية River life



Picnic area مكان للنزهة



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